United Nations E/CN.3/2004/2

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
17 December 2003

Original: English

Statistical Commission
Thirty-fifth session
2-5 March 2004
Item 3 (a) of the provisional agenda*
Demographic and social statistics: social statistics (programme review)

Social statistics (programme review)

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report is submitted in accordance with the request of the Statistical Commission at its thirty-fourth session.[a] It briefly describes the major activities carried out by the United Nations Statistics Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs in 2003 in the area of social statistics and presents a proposed work programme for social statistics for the period 2004 to 2014.

Points for discussion by the Commission are contained in paragraph 40.

[a] See *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2003, Supplement No. 4* (E/2003/24), chap. I.A.

* E/CN.3/2004/1.

03-66824 (E) 160104

Contents

		Paragraphs	Page
I.	Background	1–2	3
II.	Major activities undertaken in 2003	3–5	3
III.	Proposed work programme for social statistics	6–39	3
	A. Introduction	6–8	3
	B. Goals of the work programme for social statistics	9–14	4
	1. Fostering coordination of social statistics at the national and international levels	15–19	5
	2. Promoting international comparability of social statistics	20–24	6
	3. Promoting an integrated approach to the development of different data sources	25–37	7
	4. Promoting the use of social statistics	38–39	9
IV.	Points for discussion by the Commission	40	11
Annex			
	Recommendations of the expert group meeting on setting the scope of social statistics		13

I. Background

1. The Statistical Commission, at its thirty-fourth session, reviewed activities undertaken by the United Nations Statistics Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs in the area of social statistics and endorsed the proposed activities.[1]

2. The present report summarizes the activities undertaken by the Statistics Division since the thirty-fourth session of the Statistical Commission and presents a proposed work programme for social statistics for the period 2004 to 2014.

II. Major activities undertaken in 2003

3. The Statistics Division, in collaboration with the Siena Group for Social Statistics, conducted an expert group meeting on setting the scope of social statistics[2] in New York in May 2003. The main objective of the meeting was to prepare a work programme for furthering the development of social statistics, with a view to presenting it to the thirty-fifth session of the Statistical Commission. The recommendations of the expert group meeting are included as an annex to the present report. The full report of the meeting is available in English as a background document.

4. The Statistics Division also conducted an expert group meeting in November 2003 to review the United Nations Demographic Yearbook system.[3] The report of the expert group meeting is available in English as a background document.

5. Work on the handbook on poverty statistics is in progress. Four workshops involving regional and national stakeholders and other international agencies are planned for 2004 as part of the review process of the draft chapters (see E/2003/24, chap. II.C, para. 6 (d)).

III. Proposed work programme for social statistics

A. Introduction

6. The remaining part of the present report is devoted to the proposed work programme for social statistics for the period 2004-2014. That period is chosen to coincide with the proposed period of time for the next round of population and housing censuses from 2005-2014 (see para. 28). The work programme is based largely on the recommendations of the expert group meeting on setting the scope of social statistics (see para. 3) and subsequent consultations with various agencies and organizations at both national and international levels. Specific activities are proposed for the period 2004-2007. They include activities already endorsed by the Statistical Commission, at its thirty-third and thirty-fourth sessions,[4] in the areas of social statistics and population and housing censuses.

7. Social statistics cover a wide array of sectors, necessitating an integrated approach that takes into account their multidimensionality and interrelatedness. Linkages between different dimensions of the social concerns, as well as between the social, economic and environmental fields, will be t ıken into consideration in all stages of planning and execution of the work programme. An integrated approach in

methodological development will be adopted with respect to the three main sources of social statistics, namely censuses, surveys and administrative records. Gender, special population groups and other cross-cutting issues will be mainstreamed into all activities pertaining to social statistics.

8. International work in this context will be conducted in such a way that it raises awareness of the use of social statistical information for policy formulation and programme monitoring and evaluation. Both producers and users of social statistics will participate in the planned activities. The work programme will underscore the need for countries to use internationally agreed statistical standards and classifications and to adhere to the fundamental principles of official statistics.[5] Training and other workshops will be conducted at both regional and global levels with the collaboration of national statistical offices, national and regional professional training institutions, universities and international and regional statistical agencies.

B. Goals of the work programme for social statistics

9. The long-term goal is to develop a comprehensive system of social statistics. To achieve that objective, there is a need to evaluate, revise and supplement the existing standards in social statistics.

10. The goal in the context of the work programme is to maximize the use of the three main data sources by using them on a complementary basis. In that regard, efforts will be made to promote usage, wherever possible, of common definitions, concepts and classifications across the different sources. The work programme also includes activities that will increase support for and visibility of social statistics during the period 2004-2014.

11. Coordination at the national and international levels is an area where further and concerted work will be carried out. At the national level, there are many producers of social statistics who must be encouraged to work collaboratively in order to produce coherent and consistent social statistics. At the international level, different international organizations and agencies produce and disseminate social statistics. Among those organizations there is duplication of effort. Furthermore, there are different data sets and series on similar subjects. The work programme envisions coordinated data collection from countries by international organizations and usage of harmonized standards and classifications in related social statistics areas or domains.

12. Statistical capacity-building is essential for the development of social statistics. Therefore, countries with fragile social statistical systems will be encouraged to develop sustainable institutional capacity, with emphasis on the development of skills of staff in critical areas of social statistics.

13. One medium-term goal is that by 2007 there will have been a full review of coordination activities among international organizations and within selected countries, resulting in the documentation of current practices. In addition, a mechanism for coordination will have been established, with a forum on social statistics playing a catalytic role and a comprehensive social statistics web site to address users' information needs. The Statistics Division and its partners will have completed a review and an assessment of national social statistics in their respective

areas of responsibility. They will also have completed the initial review and dissemination of standards and classifications pertaining to social statistics and will encourage and work towards the integrated development and use of various data sources.

14. The proposed work programme specifies activities to be undertaken between 2004 and 2007 in four major areas, as indicated in paragraphs 15-39.

1. Fostering coordination of social statistics at the national and international levels

Establish a social statistics forum (2004)

15. In follow-up to the United Nations expert group meeting on setting the scope of social statistics, convened in May 2003 by the Statistics Division in collaboration with the Siena Group, it is proposed that a social statistics forum (hereafter referred to as the forum) be established. The forum will comprise social statistics experts from national statistics offices, international and regional organizations and professional training institutions. The primary function of the forum will be to review progress in the international work programme for social statistics, specify further work necessary for the development of social statistics and forward recommendations to the Statistical Commission for action. The United Nations Statistics Division will act as the secretariat of the forum.

16. The forum will meet every two years. In the interim, the secretariat will foster communication among forum members to facilitate the formulation of necessary decisions and actions. Communication will be carried out mainly through electronic means, with announcements and developments posted on the forum page on the social statistics web site (see para. 19).

17. It is proposed that the first meeting of the forum take place before the end of 2004. At that meeting, participants will finalize the terms of reference of the forum.

Review existing coordination mechanisms (2004-2006)

18. As a first step in fostering coordination, a review of existing coordination mechanisms for social statistics will be carried out at the international and national levels.

(a) At the international level, the review will be conducted by the United Nations Statistics Division, in collaboration with international and regional organizations, through the Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities;

(b) For coordination at the national level, a report comprising case studies will be prepared. The report will describe and analyse coordination mechanisms and activities among producers of social statistics, highlighting different practices and constraints, with a view to documenting good practices in coordination. Countries that will contribute to the report include Australia, Egypt, the Philippines, South Africa and the United States of America.

Expand social statistics web site (2004)

19. The Demographic and Social Statistics Branch of the United Nations Statistics Division is restructuring its web site to better reflect the diverse and interlinked areas covered by social and demographic statistics. In addition to highlighting the

work of the Branch, the web site will serve as "home" for social statistics, with active and well structured links to the specialized agencies of the United Nations responsible for education, labour and employment, health, crime, human settlements, poverty and income distribution, and other areas of social concern. It will also be "home" to the forum (see para. 15) and to international standards in social statistics (see para. 21).

2. Promoting international comparability of social statistics

20. The United Nations Statistics Division will review and widely disseminate, in a coherent and structured manner, existing standards, frameworks and classifications related to social statistics. Those activities will begin in 2005. In addition, the Division and its partners will identify and implement necessary developmental work on international standards.

Create web site on international standards (2005)

21. The United Nations Statistics Division will compile and make available, through the social and demographic statistics web site, existing international standards (frameworks, classifications, concepts and definitions) relevant to all areas of social statistics. The forum will determine a set of criteria to be applied in reviewing international standards, including the delineation of relevant areas of social concern. Custodians of international standards will be responsible for the review of their areas of responsibility and for preparing appropriate web pages to be linked to the international standards page on the social and demographic statistics web site. The web site will be updated at least twice a year beginning in 2005.

22. Printed or electronic versions of key standards will be provided upon request to Member States with limited access to the World Wide Web.

Identify and implement further developmental work in social statistics standards (beginning in 2006)

23. The United Nations Statistics Division, through the forum, will outline further developmental work needed on international standards for social statistics, specifying areas of work that agencies and organizations will carry out. In addition, the forum will propose the time line for the implementation of activities by the designated actors. The proposals will be presented to the Statistical Commission for review every two years as part of the report on social statistics.

Conduct an integrated review of international principles and recommendations (beginning in 2004)

24. As a precursor to revising or supplementing the existing recommendations on demographic and social statistics, an integrated review of these and related recommendations will be conducted through an expert group meeting and follow-up workshops. Current recommendations to be included in the integrated review include *Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses, Revision 1*;[6] *Principles and Recommendations for a Vital Statistics System, Revision 2*;[7] *Recommendations on Statistics of International Migration, Revision 1*,[8] and its draft supplementary handbook and the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics.[5] The meetings will also review a proposed list of minimum and essential

topics (E/2003/24, chap. II.A, paras. 2 (a) and 2 (d); E/CN.3/2003/2, paras. 7 and 9). Those meetings and workshops will start in 2004 and continue into 2005.

3. Promoting an integrated approach to the development of different data sources

Review the totality of data sources for social statistics (2004-2006)

25. The United Nations Statistics Division and each participating agency and organization, including the International Labour Organization (ILO), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the World Health Organization (WHO), in collaboration with the regional commissions, will assess the quality and availability of national social statistics in their areas of responsibility and competency. The review will consider the totality of data sources such as population and housing censuses, population and household surveys and administrative records. It will include an assessment of the ability of countries to produce regularly statistics of reasonable quality, with explanations of standards for assessing data quality. The review will also cover timeliness of data reporting, conformity to international standards and recommendations, and the extent to which units and classifications are harmonized across sources. The findings will be published as technical reports. The Statistics Division will produce its report in 2004 while the other agencies and organizations will do so in 2005-2006.

26. The forum will review the technical reports prepared by the organizations as they become available and recommend specific strategies for strengthening social statistics. The recommendations will be submitted to the Statistical Commission in 2007.

Review national social statistics necessary for supporting the production of Millennium Development Goal indicators (2004-2006)

27. To monitor effectively the social aspects of the Millennium Development Goals, it is essential to know, understand and improve the availability and quality of social statistics. To address those needs, a joint technical report, based on the reports referred to in paragraph 25, will be produced by 2006. The joint report will focus on the basic matrix of national statistics necessary for supporting the production of social indicators to monitor the Millennium Development Goals.

Proclaim a world programme of population and housing censuses for the decade 2005-2014

28. The expert group meeting on setting the scope of social statistics requested that a world programme of population and housing censuses (2005-2014) be established. It is proposed that the Statistical Commission support the implementation of the 2005-2014 round of population and housing censuses and promote the use of censuses for generating social statistics.

29. The world programme of population and housing censuses (2005-2014) will include the following activities, all of which have been endorsed by the Commission at its thirty-third and thirty-fourth sessions (references to relevant Commission documents are given in parentheses).

Meetings and workshops:

(a) United Nations symposium on the world population and housing census programme: current needs and future prospects (E/2003/23, chap. II.A, para. 2 (a); E/CN.3/2003/2, para. 6). The symposium will be held in 2004;

(b) Training workshops on the use of geographical information systems and digital mapping in data collection and dissemination (E/2003/23, chap. II.A, para. 2 (a); E/CN.3/2003/2, para. 14). The workshops will be initiated in 2006;

Technical reports:

(c) Technical report on census evaluation (E/2002/24, chap. II.A, para. 5 (a); E/CN.2/2002/2, para. 16 (d)), to be completed in 2006;

(d) Handbook on census data dissemination (E/2003/24, chap. II.A, para. 2 (a); E/CN.3/2003/2, para. 15; E/CN.3/2002/2, para. 16 (e)), to be completed in 2006;

(e) Supplementary annex to *Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses, Revision 1* (E/2003/24, chap. II.A, para. 2 (a); E/CN.3/2003/2, para. 9). The annex will be published in 2007.

30. Technical advisory services are required to supplement training workshops as countries begin to plan and implement the censuses of population and housing during the decade 2005-2014. The Statistics Division will continue to provide those services on an ad hoc basis to countries to the extent that resources permit. In particular, newly independent States and countries in post-conflict or other difficult situations may require intensive technical advisory assistance. Technical advisory services will cover the period 2004-2015.

Enhance the development and utilization of national administrative records for statistical purposes (2005-2014)

31. Efforts will be made to strengthen the development and utilization of national administrative systems for social statistics, with specific attention to civil registration systems for vital statistics, population registers and other administrative records. Activities in the area will be implemented as part of an integrated set of activities with the world programme of population and housing censuses (2005-2014) The issue of strengthening administrative systems will also be addressed as part of the symposium on the world population and housing census programme (see para. 29 (a)), which will consider alternative designs for the collection and compilation of social and demographic statistics.

32. Meetings and workshops:

Workshops on an integrated approach to the production of fertility, mortality and international migration statistics from administrative records, population censuses and sample surveys. Several workshops will be carried out between 2004-2007.

33. Technical reports and handbooks:

(a) Technical report on the collection, compilation and dissemination of international migration statistics (E/2003/24, chap. II.A, para. 2 (a); E/CN.3/2003/2, para. 7). The report will be completed in 2004;

(b) Handbook on statistics of international migration, prepared in collaboration with the Population Division of the Department of Economic and

Social Affairs, to complement *Recommendations on Statistics of International Migration, Revision 1*[8] (see E/2003/24, chap. II.A, para. 2 (d)). The publication will be completed in 2006.

34. The Statistics Division will continue to provide, on an ad hoc basis, technical assistance to countries to support and strengthen national civil registration and other administrative recording systems used in the production of population, vital and social statistics.

Strengthen national capacity to conduct surveys in a sustained and integrated manner (2005-2014)

35. Strengthening national capacity to conduct surveys on a sustained basis will be part of an integrated set of activities implemented in tandem with the proposed world programme of population and housing censuses (2005-2014). Training seminars and workshops on surveys will include promoting the harmonization, integration and complementary use of surveys with other sources of data.

36. Meetings and workshops:

(a) Workshops to review the draft handbook on poverty statistics and examine country practices (see E/2003/24, chap. II.C, para. 6 (d)) (2004);

(b) Expert group meeting to review the draft handbook on poverty statistics (see E/2003/24, chap. II.A, para. 6 (d)) (2005);

(c) Workshops on data-collection methods in new and emerging areas of social concern: theme — collection of disability statistics (2004) (United Nations Statistics Division and Washington Group on Disability Measurement);

(d) Workshops on planning multi-purpose surveys (2007) (United Nations Statistics Division and Statistics Canada).

37. Technical reports and handbooks:

(a) Handbook on designing household sample surveys (E/2002/24, chap. II.A, para. 5 (a); E/CN.3/2002/2, para. 16 (c)) (2004) (United Nations Statistics Division);

(b) Handbook on poverty statistics (see E/2003/24, chap. II.C, para. 6 (d)) (2005) (United Nations Statistics Division);

(c) Handbook on multi-purpose surveys (2006) (Statistics Canada and United Nations Statistics Division).

4. Promoting the use of social statistics

Maximize the utilization of social statistics for policy formulation, programme planning and monitoring (2004-2014)

38. Based on the recommendations of the expert group meeting on setting the scope of social statistics and on the conclusions and recommendations of the expert group meeting to review the United Nations Demographic Yearbook system, the United Nations Statistics Division is strengthening its Demographic Yearbook system to better respond to the increasing demand for social statistics, at the same

time expanding its user base by making its outputs more relevant and accessible to a wide range of users. Specifically, the Statistics Division will

(a) Convene technical working groups to review and revise the *Demographic Yearbook*, adopting a multi-tiered system, highlighting a minimum set of statistics that can be provided routinely by most or all countries irrespective of the level of statistical development or data availability (2004-2005);

(b) Develop a flexible system of data collection that provides a wider range of options to countries with respect to how and when data are submitted, giving consideration to electronic forms of data collection in addition to those already in place. Specifically, the United Nations Statistics Division will establish country domains on the Division servers, allowing countries to fill in data online; set up expert technical teams to assist in developing a framework for building national databases capable of generating outputs that can feed data directly into the Demographic Yearbook system; and test other electronic forms and their suitability for data collection (beginning in 2004);

(c) Expand the coverage and content of social statistics in the *Demographic Yearbook* to include disability statistics (E/2003/24, chap. II.A, para. 5 (a); E/CN.3/2003/7, para. 12). The expansion will be initiated in 2004. The inclusion of housing statistics in the *Demographic Yearbook* will be considered for 2005;

(d) Develop an array of products that adequately target the many users of the *Demographic Yearbook*, reflect their different levels of sophistication and meet their specific needs, ranging from basic maps and information for children to complex downloading facilities for researchers, scholars and decision makers (beginning in 2005);

(e) Provide a comprehensive description of the Demographic Yearbook data-collection system on the Demographic Yearbook site within the social and demographic statistics web site (see para. 19). The Division will also explore the possibility of allowing national statistical offices and other partners, as well as the Division itself, to exchange data and information or provide updates on developments through the same web site (beginning in 2004);

(f) Make the *Demographic Yearbook* available on the social and demographic statistics web site in portable document format (2004);

(g) Prepare a report on the world's women, 2005, in a format and language accessible to policy makers, planners, researchers and advocates. The 2005 edition will be based on the reporting of national statistical authorities to the *Demographic Yearbook*; on national population policies compiled by the United Nations Population Division; on the reports of States parties to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women; and on other authoritative national reports provided to the Division for the Advancement of Women, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. The edition will also utilize official national statistics collected by such agencies as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the International Labour Organization, the World Health Organization, the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees as well as the regional commissions;

(h) Undertake a thorough review of the Demographic Yearbook work programme for 2004-2006 to set priorities, in the light of the recommendations of the recent expert group meeting. The review will entail locating areas where work may be reduced or streamlined to accommodate the new activities and procedures recommended by the expert group (2004).

39. The United Nations Statistics Division and international organizations will promote the provision and dissemination of metadata on the three major data sources of social statistics cited in the present report. It will support the adoption of dissemination standards such as the General Data Dissemination System of the International Monetary Fund. The Statistics Division will review and revise as necessary the Demographic Yearbook metadata system through a regular review process, including an expert group meeting and international workshops.

Meetings and workshops:

(a) Expert group meeting to review the Demographic Yearbook collection of metadata on population and housing censuses, administrative registers and population and household surveys, to monitor and assess the quality and timeliness of social and demographic statistics (2005);

(b) International workshops to review national metadata systems used to describe the quality and timeliness of social and demographic statistics produced through population and housing censuses, surveys and administrative registers (2005, 2006) (United Nations Statistics Division, World Bank, International Monetary Fund).

IV. Points for discussion by the Commission

40. **The Statistical Commission may wish**:

(a) **To comment on the proposed new activities contained in paragraphs 15 to 39;**

(b) **To endorse the creation of a forum on social statistics;**

(c) **To review and endorse the proposed work programme.**

Notes

[1] See *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2003, Supplement No. 4* (E/2003/24), chap. II.C, paras. 6 (a-e).

[2] See http://unstats.un.org/org/unsd/demographic/workshop/socialstat.

[3] See http://unstats.un.org/org/unsd/demographic/workshop/EGM_dyb.

[4] See *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2002, Supplement No. 4* (E/2002/24), chap. II.A, para. 5; and *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2003, Supplement No. 4* (E/2003/24), chap. II.A, para. 2, and chap. II.C, para. 6.

[5] *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1994, Supplement No. 9* (E/1994/29), chap. V, para. 59.

[6] *Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses, Rev. 1* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.98.XVII.8 and corrigendum).

[7] *Principles and Recommendations for a Vital Statistical System, Rev. 2* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.01.XVII.10).

[8] United Nations (1998), *Recommendations on Statistics of International Migration, Rev. 1* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.98.XVII.14, and Corr.1).

Annex

Recommendations of the expert group meeting on setting the scope of social statistics

The expert group:

(a) Following its consideration of frameworks and noting the importance of maintaining a flexible system that can meet the needs of various social statistics frameworks, requested the United Nations Statistics Division and other partners, including national statistical offices, to develop a work programme of activities through 2015 to set the scope of social statistics that would complement future programme activities across censuses, surveys and administrative records. The scope would include aspects of the human life cycle, well-being, and the linkages among social, economic and environmental statistics. The United Nations Statistics Division will present the work plan to the thirty-fifth session of the Statistical Commission.

With respect to this and all recommendations that follow, work programmes to be developed should consider whether implementation should occur in stages and, if so, identify those stages and define the content of each. For all recommendations, the United Nations Statistics Division and its partners should specify outputs, time lines for implementation, major actors and their specific responsibilities and methods of coordination;

(b) Requested the United Nations Statistics Division, in collaboration with international and regional agencies and national statistical offices, to conduct a disciplined review and assessment of social statistics and identify necessary substantive developmental work on international standards. The review and assessment should cover the current state of social statistics, international standards for social statistics, standards for assessing data quality and mechanisms for monitoring conformity to standards;

(c) Recommended examining the totality of data sources for social statistics, such as censuses, surveys and administrative registers, and reviewing common standards, units and classifications necessary across these sources. The expert group also recommended:

(i) That the world programme for the 2010 round of population and housing censuses be implemented and that every country conduct a census by 2014;

(ii) That the United Nations Statistics Division provide support and guidance to countries preparing or planning to set up, strengthen or use administrative registers and/or administrative files for statistical purposes. Vital statistics should be part of all countries' data systems. With respect to administrative registers, due attention should be given to data quality and the issue of confidentiality;

(iii) That the United Nations Statistics Division, the Siena Group and international agencies collaborate with countries to strengthen national capacity to conduct relevant surveys on a sustained and integrated basis, drawing on the experience of those national statistical offices that have a successful system of multiple surveys, including multi-purpose as well as specialized surveys;

(iv) That the Siena Group take the lead in developing, documenting and promoting emerging methodologies for integrating the various data sources.

(d) Requested that the United Nations Statistics Division and the Siena Group raise awareness of the relevance of social statistics to policy and the important role that censuses play. The expert group emphasized the need to make social statistics more visible and to promote the use of statistics for policy formulation, planning and monitoring. Strategies to attain this include training policy makers, researchers, students, media, civil society and non-governmental organizations on the use of social statistics and presenting information that would demonstrate the power of statistics for policy formulation. Noting that the Division is planning to produce a handbook on the dissemination of data for population and housing censuses, the expert group recommended that in preparing the handbook the Division should incorporate in all relevant chapters the possibilities offered by information and communication technology, for example, the ways of enhancing information products and services on social statistics to fit more appropriately the needs of the different users mentioned above;

(e) Recommended that the United Nations Statistics Division and the Siena Group promote international partnership in training in official statistics, in particular social statistics, guided by the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics; and that it be done at both the regional and global levels, stimulating cooperation among national statistical offices, national and regional professional training institutions, universities and international and regional statistical agencies;

(f) Called for the systematic adoption by countries of statistical standards and principles, including the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics, and for the development of social statistics to take place within the Fundamental Principles. Adopting standard systems for documenting and improving social statistics such as the General Data Dissemination System of the International Monetary Fund would also help to increase the utility of and public trust in statistics;

(g) Recommended that the United Nations Statistics Division, in collaboration with international and relevant regional agencies, prepare a report documenting the roles and statistical activities of international organizations, as well as existing mechanisms and bodies for inter-agency coordination, in particular with respect to social statistics, with a view to (a) increasing the understanding of social statisticians at the national, regional and international levels of the roles and activities of the international organizations; and (b) finding ways to make the existing mechanisms for coordination more effective. The expert group further recommended that the results of all inter-agency meetings be forwarded to the new group recommended in paragraph (i) below, in order that the new group may consider the inter-agency meetings' recommended directions in its work plan;

(h) Requested that the United Nations Statistics Division and other agencies, in collaboration with national statistical offices, compile a report describing and analysing coordination mechanisms and activities among producers of social statistics at the national level, recognizing different practices and constraints, with a view to documenting good practices for such coordination;

(i) Based on the experience of the Siena Group and the expert group on setting the scope of social statistics, and to follow up on the recommendations contained in this report, recommended the establishment of a forum for social

statistics where experts from national statistical offices, international and regional agencies and professional training institutional could exchange information on a regular basis. Such a forum would promote better coordination and understanding between national statistical offices and international organizations. In addition, an electronic format was proposed to facilitate communication among social statisticians;

(j) In the light of the current high priority being given to the Millennium Development Goals, recommended that the United Nations Statistics Division, in consultation with participating agencies, produce a technical report reviewing the standards and quality of underlying national statistics needed for producing the Millennium Development Goal indicators that relate to social conditions and for assessing national capacity to collect and disseminate those statistics, as currently reported to the international statistical community, and that that report be presented to the working group on the Millennium Development Goal indicators. The work will take into account existing initiatives to assess the quality of underlying national data for the indicators;

(k) Recommended that the expert group meeting to review the *Demographic Yearbook*, held in November 2003, consider the recommendations of the expert group meeting on setting the scope of social statistics, with a view to improving the collection, dissemination and integration of demographic and social statistics;

(l) Invited the Siena Group and other city groups related to social statistics, including the Washington Group on Disability Measurement, the Rio Group, and the Delhi Group on Informal Sector Statistics, to review at their next meeting their mandate and work plan, taking into account the outcome of the present meeting and the recommendation to establish a United Nations forum for social statistics (see para. (i)).